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OUR CHIEF TIME-PIECE LOSING TIME.

A DISTINGUISHED French astronomer, author of one of the most fascinating works on popular astronomy that has hitherto appeared, remarks, that a man would be looked upon as a maniac who should speak of the influence of Jupiter's moons upon the cotton-trade. Yet, as he proceeds to shew, there is an easily traced connection between the ideas which appear at first sight so incongruous. The required link is the determination of terrestrial longitude.

Similarly, what would be thought of an astronomer who, regarding thoughtfully the stately motion of the sidereal system, as exhibited on a magnified, and therefore appreciable, scale by a powerful telescope, should speak of the connection between this movement and the intrinsic worth of a sovereign? The natural thought with most men would be that 'too much learning' had made the astronomer mad. Yet, when we come to inquire closely into the question of a sovereign's intrinsic value, we find ourselves led to the diurnal motion of the stars, and that by no very intricate path. For, what is a sovereign? A coin containing so many parts of gold mixed with so many parts of alloy. An ounce, we know, is the weight of such and such a volume of a certain standard substance—that is, so many cubic inches or parts of a cubic inch of that substance. But what is an inch? It is determined, we find, as a certain fraction of the length of a pendulum vibrating seconds in the latitude of London. A second, we know, is a certain portion of a mean solar day, and is practically determined by a reference to what is called a sidereal day—the interval, namely, between the successive passages by the same star of the celestial meridian of any fixed place. This interval is assumed to be constant, and it has indeed been described as the 'one constant element' known to astronomers.

We find, then, that there is a connection, and a very important connection, between the motion of the stars and our measures, not merely of value, but of weight, length, volume, and time. In fact, our whole system of weights and measures is

founded on the apparent diurnal motion of the sidereal system, that is, on the real diurnal rotation of the earth. We may look on the meridian plane in which the great transit-telescope of the Greenwich Observatory is made to swing, as the gigantic hand of a mighty dial, a hand which, extending outwards among the stars, traces out for us, by its motion among them, the exact progress of time, and so gives us the means of weighing, measuring, and valuing terrestrial objects with an exactitude which is at present *beyond* our wants.

The earth, then, is our 'chief time-piece,' and it is of the correctness of this giant clock that we are now to speak.

But how can we test a time-piece whose motions we select to regulate every other time-piece? If a man sets his watch every morning by the clock at Westminster, it is clearly impossible for him to test the accuracy of that clock by the motions of his watch. It would, indeed, be possible to detect any gross change of rate; but, for the purpose of illustration, I assume, what is indeed the case, that the clock is very accurate, and therefore that minute errors only are to be looked for even in long intervals of time. And just as the watch set by a clock cannot be made use of to test the clock for small errors, so our best time-pieces cannot be employed to detect slow variations, if any such exist, in the earth's rotation-period.

Sir William Herschel, who early saw the importance of the subject, suggested another method. Some of the planets rotate in such a manner, and bear such distinct marks upon their surface, that it is possible, by a series of observations extending over a long interval of time, to determine the length of their rotation-period within a second or two. Supposing their rotation uniform, we at once obtain an accurate measure of time. Supposing their rotation *not* uniform, we obtain—(1) a hint of the kind of change we are looking for; and (2), by the comparison of two or more planets, the means of guessing how the variation is to be distributed between the observed planets and our own earth.

Unfortunately, it turned out that Jupiter, one of

the planets from which Herschel expected most, does not afford us exact information—his real surface being always veiled by his dense and vapour-laden atmosphere. Saturn, Venus, and Mercury are similarly circumstanced, and are in other respects unfavourable objects for this sort of observation. Mars only, of all the planets, is really available. Distinctly marked (in telescopes of sufficient power) with continents and oceans, which are rarely concealed by vapours, this planet is in other respects fortunately situated. For it is certain that whatever variations may be taking place in planetary rotations must be due to external agencies. Now, Saturn and Jupiter have their satellites to influence (perhaps appreciably in long intervals of time) their rotation-movements. Venus and Mercury are near the sun, and are therefore in this respect worse off than the earth, whose rotation is in question. Mars, on the other hand, far removed from the sun, having also no moon, and being of small dimensions (a very important point, be it observed, since the tidal action of the sun depends on the dimensions of a planet), is likely to have a rotation-period all but absolutely constant.

Herschel was rather unfortunate in his observations of Mars. Having obtained a rough approximation from Mars' rotation in an interval of two days—this rough approximation being, as it happened, only thirty-seven seconds in excess of the true period, he proceeded to take three intervals of one month each. This should have given a much better value, but, as it happened, the mean of the values he obtained was forty-six seconds too great. He then took a period of two years, and being misled by the erroneous values he had already obtained, he *missed one rotation*, getting a value two minutes too great. Thirty years ago, two German astronomers, Messrs Beer and Mädler, tried the same problem, and taking a period of seven years, obtained a value which exceeds the true value by only one second. Another German, Kaiser, by combining more observations, obtained a value which is within one-fiftieth of a second of the true value. But a comparison of observations extending over two hundred years has enabled an English calculator to obtain a value which he considers to lie within one-hundredth part of a second of the truth. This value for Mars' rotation-period is 24 hours, 37 minutes, 22.74 seconds.

Here, then, we have a result so accurate, that, *at some future time*, it may serve to test the earth's rotation-period. We have compared the rotation-rate of our test-planet with the earth's rate during the past two hundred years; and therefore, if the earth's rate vary by more than one-hundredth of a second in the next two or three hundred years, we shall—or, rather, our descendants will—begin to have some notion of the change at the end of that time.

But, in the meantime, mankind being impatient, and not willing to leave to a distant posterity any question which can possibly be answered *now*, astronomers have looked around them for information available at once on this interesting point. The search has not been in vain. In fact, we are able to announce, with an approach to positiveness, that our great terrestrial time-piece is actually *losing time*.

In our moon we have a neighbour which has long been in the habit of answering truthfully questions addressed to her by astronomers. Of old,

she told Newton about gravitation, and when he doubted, and urged contradictory evidence offered—as men in his time supposed—by the earth, she set him on the right track, so that when in due time the evidence offered by the earth was corrected, Newton was prepared at once to accept and propound the noble theory which rendered his name illustrious. Again, men wished to learn the true shape of the earth, and went hither and thither measuring its globe; but the moon, meanwhile, told the astronomer who remained at home a truer tale. They sought to learn the earth's distance from the sun, and from this and that point they turned their telescopes on Venus in transit; but the moon has set them nearer the truth, and that not by a few miles, but by three millions or more. We shall see that she has had something to say about our great terrestrial time-piece.

One of the great charms of the science of astronomy is, that it enables men to *predict*. At such and such an hour, the astronomer is able to say, a celestial body will occupy such and such a point on the celestial sphere. You direct a telescope towards the point named, and lo! at the given instant the promised orb sweeps across the field of view. Each year there is issued a thick octavo volume crowded with such predictions, three or four years in advance of the events predicted; and these predictions are accepted with as little doubt by astronomers as if they were the records of past events.

But astronomers are not only able to predict—they can also trace back the paths of the celestial bodies, and say: 'At such and such a long-past epoch, a given star or planet occupied such and such a position upon the celestial sphere.' But how are they to verify such a statement? It is clear that, in general, they cannot do so. Those who are able to appreciate (or, better, to make use of) the predictions of astronomy, will, indeed, very readily accord a full measure of confidence to calculations of past events. They know that astronomy is justly named the most exact of the sciences, and they can see that there is nothing, in the nature of things, to render retrospection more difficult than prevision. But there are hundreds who have no such experience of the exactness of modern astronomical methods—who have, on the contrary, a vague notion that modern astronomy is merely the successor of systems now exploded; perhaps even that it may one day have to make way in its turn for new methods. And if all other men were willing to accept the calculations of astronomers respecting long-past events, astronomers themselves would be less easily satisfied. Long experience has taught them that the detection of error is the most fruitful source of knowledge; therefore, wherever such a course is possible, they always gladly submit their calculations to the test of observation.

Now, looking backward into the far past, it is only here and there that we see records which afford means of comparison with modern calculations. The planets have swept on in their courses for ages with none to note them. Gradually, observant men began to notice and record the more remarkable phenomena. But such records, made with very insufficient instrumental means, have in general but little actual value. It has been found easy to confirm them without any special regard to accuracy of calculation.

But there is one class of phenomena which no inaccuracy of observation can very greatly affect. A total eclipse of the sun is an occurrence so remarkable, that (1) it can hardly take place without being recorded, and (2) a very rough record will suffice to determine the particular eclipse referred to. Long intervals elapse between successive total eclipses visible at the same place on the earth's surface; and even partial eclipses of noteworthy extent occur but seldom at any assigned place. Very early, therefore, in the history of modern astronomy, the suggestion was made, that eclipses recorded by ancient astronomers should be calculated retrospectively. An unexpected result rewarded the undertaking: it was found that ancient eclipses could not be fairly accounted for without assigning a slower motion to the moon in long-past ages than she has at present!

Here was a difficulty which long puzzled mathematicians. One after another was foiled by it. Halley, an English mathematician, had detected the difficulty, but no English mathematician was able to grapple with it. Contented with Newton's fame, they had suffered their continental rivals to shoot far ahead in the course he had pointed out. But the best continental mathematicians were defeated. In papers of acknowledged merit, adorned by a variety of new processes, and shewing a deep insight into the question at issue, they yet arrived, one and all, at the same conclusion—failure.

Ninety years elapsed before the true explanation was offered by the great mathematician Laplace. A full exposition of his views would be out of place in such a paper as the present, but, briefly, they amount to this:

The moon travels in her orbit, swayed chiefly by the earth's attraction. But the sun, though greatly more distant, owing to the immensity of his mass, plays an important part in guiding our satellite. His influence tends to relieve the moon, in part, from the earth's sway. Thus, she travels in a wider orbit, and with a slower motion, than she would have but for the sun's influence. Now, the earth is not at all times equally distant from the sun, and his influence upon the moon is accordingly variable. In winter, when the earth is nearest to the sun, his influence is greatest. The lunar month, accordingly (as any one may see by referring to an almanac), is longer in winter than in summer. This variation had long been recognised as the moon's 'annual equation;' but Laplace was the first to point out that the variation is itself slowly varying. The earth's orbit is slowly changing in shape—becoming more and more nearly circular year by year. As the greater axis of her orbit is unchanging, it is clear that the actual extent of the orbit is slowly increasing. Thus, the moon is slightly released from the sun's influence year by year, and so brought more and more under the earth's influence. She travels, therefore, continually faster and faster; though the change is indeed but a very minute one—only to be detected in long intervals of time. Also the moon's *acceleration*, as the change is termed, is only temporary, and will in due time be replaced by an equally gradual retardation.

When Laplace had calculated the extent of the change due to the cause he had detected, and when it was found that ancient eclipses were now satisfactorily accounted for, it may well be believed

that there was triumph in the mathematical camp. But this was not all. Other mathematicians attacked the same problem, and their results agreed so closely that all were convinced that the difficulty was thoroughly vanquished.

A very noteworthy result flowed from Laplace's calculations. Amongst other solutions which had been suggested, was the supposition (supported by no less an authority than Sir Isaac Newton, who lived to see the commencement of the long conflict maintained by mathematicians with this difficulty), that it is not the moon travelling more quickly, but our earth rotating more slowly, which causes the observed discrepancy. Now, it resulted from Laplace's labours—as he was the first to announce—that the period of the earth's rotation has not varied by one-tenth of a second per century in the last two thousand years. The question thus satisfactorily settled, as was supposed, was shelved for more than a quarter of a century. The result, also, which seemed to flow from the discussion—the constancy of the earth's rotation-movement—was accepted; and, as we have seen, our national system of measures was founded upon the assumed constancy of the day's duration.

But mathematicians were premature in their rejoicings. The question has been brought, by the labours of Professor Adams—co-discoverer with Leverrier of the distant Neptune—almost exactly to the point which it occupied a century ago. We are face to face with the very difficulties—somewhat modified in extent, but not in character—which puzzled Halley, Euler, and Lagrange. It would be an injustice to the memory of Laplace to say that his labours were thrown away. The explanation offered by him is indeed a just one, but it is insufficient. Properly estimated, it removes only half the difficulty which had perplexed mathematicians. It would be quite impossible to present in brief space, and in a form suited to these pages, the views propounded by Adams. What, for instance, would most of our readers learn if we were to tell them that, 'when the variability of the eccentricity is taken into account, in integrating the differential equations involved in the problem of the lunar motions—that is, when the eccentricity is made a function of the time—non-periodic or secular terms appear in the expression for the moon's mean motion—and so on?' Let it suffice to say that Laplace had considered only the effect of the sun in diminishing the earth's *pull* on the moon, supposing that the slow variation in the sun's *direct* influence on the moon's motion in her orbit must be self-compensatory in long intervals of time. Adams has shewn, on the contrary, that when this variation is closely examined, no such compensation is found to take place; and that the effect of this want of compensation is to diminish by more than one-half the effects due to the slow variation examined by Laplace.

These views gave rise at first to considerable controversy. Pontecoulant characterised Adams's processes as 'analytical conjuring tricks;' and Leverrier stood up gallantly in defence of Laplace. The contest swayed hither and thither for a while; but gradually the press of new arrivals on Adams's side began to prevail. One by one, his antagonists gave way; new processes have confirmed his results, figure for figure; and no doubt now exists, in the mind of any astronomer competent to judge, of the correctness of Adams's views.

But, side by side with this inquiry, another had

been in progress. A crowd of diligent labourers had been searching with close and rigid scrutiny into the circumstances attending ancient eclipses. A new light had been thrown upon this subject by the labours of modern travellers and historians. One remarkable instance of this may be cited. Mr Layard has identified the site of Larissa with the modern Nimroud. Now, Xenophon relates that when Larissa was besieged by the Persians, an eclipse of the sun took place, so remarkable in its effects, and therefore undoubtedly total, that the Median defenders of the town threw down their arms, and the city was accordingly captured. And Hansen has shewn that a certain estimate of the moon's motion makes the eclipse which occurred on August 15, 310 B.C., not only *total* but *central* at Nimroud. Some other remarkable eclipses—as the celebrated sunset eclipse (total) at Rome, 399 B.C., the eclipse which enveloped the fleet of Agathocles as he escaped from Syracuse; the famous eclipse of Thales, which interrupted a battle between the Medes and Lydians; and even the partial eclipse which (probably) caused the 'going back of the shadow upon the dial of Ahaz'—have all been accounted for satisfactorily by Hansen's estimate of the moon's motion; so, also, have nineteen lunar eclipses recorded in the *Almagest*.

The estimate of Hansen's, which accounts so satisfactorily for solar and lunar eclipses, makes the moon's rate of motion increase more than twice as fast as it should do according to the calculations of Adams. But before our readers run away with the notion that astronomers have here gone quite astray, it will be well to present, in a simple manner, the extreme minuteness of the discrepancy about which all the coil has been made.

Suppose that, just in front of our moon, a false moon exactly equal to ours, in size and appearance, were to set off with a motion corresponding to the present motion of the moon, save only in one respect—namely, that the false moon's motion should not be subject to the change we are considering, termed the *acceleration*. Then, one hundred years would elapse before our moon would fairly begin to shew in advance. She would, in that time, have brought only one-one-hundred-and-fiftieth part of her breadth from behind the false moon. At the end of another century, she would have gained four times as much; at the end of a third, nine times as much; and so on. She would not fairly have cleared her own breadth in less than twelve hundred years. But the *whole* of this gain, minute as it is, is not left unaccounted for by our modern astronomical theories. *Half* the gain is explained, the other half remains to be interpreted; in other words, *the moon travels further by about half her own breadth in twelve centuries than she should do according to the lunar theory.*

But in this difficulty, small as it seems, we are not left wholly without resource. We are not only able to say that the discrepancy is probably due to a gradual retardation of the earth's rotation-movement, but we are able to place our finger on a very sufficient cause for such a retardation. One of the most firmly established principles of modern science is this—that where *work* is done, force is, in some way or other, consumed. The *doing of work* may shew itself in a variety of ways—in the generation of heat, in the production of light, in the raising of weights, and so on; but in every case, an equivalent force must be expended.

If the brakes are applied to a train in motion, intense heat is generated in the substance of the brake; now, the force employed by the brakeman is *not* equivalent to the heat generated. Where, then, is the balance of force expended? We all know that the train's motion is retarded, and this loss of motion represents the requisite expenditure of force. Now, is there any process in nature resembling, in however remote a degree, the application of a brake to check the earth's rotation? There is. The tidal wave which sweeps, twice a day, round the earth, travels in a direction contrary to the earth's motion of rotation. That this wave 'does work,' no one can doubt who has watched its effects. The mere rise and fall in open ocean may not be strikingly indicative of 'work done;' but when we see the behaviour of the tidal wave in narrow channels, when we see heavily laden ships swept steadily up our tidal rivers, we cannot but recognise the expenditure of force. Now, where does this force come from? Motion being the great 'force-measurer,' what motion *suffers* that the tides may *work*? We may securely reply, that the only motion which *can* supply the requisite force is the earth's motion of rotation. Therefore, it is no idle dream, but a matter of absolute certainty, that, though slowly, still very surely, our terrestrial globe is losing its rotation-movement.

Considered as a time-piece, what are the earth's errors? Suppose, for a moment, that the earth was *timed* and *rated* two thousand years ago, how much has she *lost*, and what is her 'rate-error?' She has lost in that interval nearly one hour and a quarter, and she is losing now at the rate of one second in twelve weeks. In other words, the length of a day is now more by about one-eighty-fourth part of a second than it was two thousand years ago. At this rate of change, our day would merge into a lunar month in the course of thirty-six thousand millions of years. But after a while, the change will take place more slowly, and some trillion or so of years will elapse before the full change is effected.

Distant, however, as is the epoch at which the changes we have been considering will become effective, the subject appears to us to have an interest apart from the mere speculative consideration of the future physical condition of our globe. Instead of the recurrence of ever-varying, closely intermingled cycles of fluctuation, we see, now for the first time, the evidence of cosmical decay—a decay which, in its slow progress, may be but the preparation for renewed genesis—but still, a decay which, so far as the races at present subsisting upon the earth are concerned, must be looked upon as finally and completely destructive.

ONE OF THE FAMILY.

CHAPTER XXI.—A TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

BEFORE Androclus had finished his sitting, there came to him a message, delivered through the keyhole—for Woody valued his personal safety too highly to venture boldly into the sanctuary—which astonished that classic character almost as much as the magnanimity of the lion had surprised his prototype.

'Ma sends her compliments to Mr Blake, and would he be so kind as to stay for a family dinner?' 'What!' screamed Claude, rushing to the door, and dragging his offspring in by the collar before

he could make his escape. 'How dare you play such tricks upon my friends? I'll teach you to make a gentleman an April fool a week after date. Say it again, sir, and I'll shake your head off.'

With this incentive to iteration before his eyes, it was not likely that Master Woodford would repeat his invitation in so many words.

'You needn't believe it,' whined he in an abject tone: 'it's nothing to me whether the gentleman stops or not. But that's what ma told me to say; and I saw her going to the cupboard for plums to put in the suet-pudding, and turning up the bottle of whisky, to see whether there was enough for two; and she said there was, if you would only take as much as was good for you.'

Here Valentine Blake hastened to interfere, lest condign punishment should be inflicted upon the artless youth, and bade him convey his respectful compliments to his mother, and the assurance that he would very gladly stay to dinner; a message, by the by, which was delivered in the following fashion: 'All right, ma. I told you so; the model jumped at it.'

But Mr Murphy had entertained no idea of chastising his son. Once assured of the reality of the invitation from his wife, Claude had no thought for anything but that stupendous fact. 'Blake,' gasped he, as soon as they were left alone, 'you're a good-looking fellow, but I could not have believed that Apollo himself would have achieved such a conquest. The wife of Socrates should be above suspicion, but it is clear that Selina is enamoured of you. Don't consider the philosopher, I beg; perhaps you may be even able to do him a good turn, by putting in a word about a latch-key. Dinner! why, nobody has been asked to dine here since my bachelor-days. Shade of Epicurus, there will be pickled onions with the cold beef! But Blake, Blake!'—here Mr Murphy's voice sank to quite sepulchral tones—'beware of the wine called Port, which will be set upon the table after dinner. If it is a fresh bottle, it will be of that vintage imported from Africa's sunny strand at four-and-twenty shillings, bottles included; if it is a half-bottle, I know of an earwig that met his death in that at least three weeks ago. As for the whisky, however, there is plenty of it down here, which Selina knows nothing about. See'—Mr Murphy disclosed a cupboard furnished with a false front of palettes and small pictures, behind which reposed several samples of Kinahan—'see how the wind (and likewise the cold water) is tempered to the shorn lamb!'

But Mr Murphy was not destined to enjoy the evening with his new friend in the convivial manner he had reckoned upon. The dinner, however, which, to Mr Blake, who had been accustomed to campaigning, seemed a very tolerable repast, went off with complete success, except for a perilous jest of Claude's, who, when the cold beef appeared, observed to his guest: 'There are just a pair of canvas-backed ducks, and you see your dinner.'

'There are nothing of the sort,' broke in Mrs Murphy indignantly.

'It's a matter of opinion, my dear,' returned the painter airily. 'I was referring to my little pictures of *L'Allegro* and *Penseroso* on the wall yonder: very pretty girls, and generally accounted to be a pair of canvas-backed'—

'A little decorum, if you please, Mr Murphy,' broke in Selina.—'Allow me to recommend you,

Mr Blake—since my husband forgets everything except his ill-timed jokes—to try a little of that Port wine. I should apologise for its having been opened, but you will find it none the worse for that: it is a wine that has got a great deal of body in it.'

'It had, until she fished it out with her knitting-needles,' murmured the incorrigible Claude.

But quite as much to the surprise of his host as of his hostess, Valentine Blake replied with thanks that he took neither wine nor spirits—a circumstance in itself peculiar, but the result of which was absolutely unprecedented, for when Mrs Murphy rose to depart, and Claude, with energetic politeness, sprang to the door to let her out, she expressed herself as follows: 'Since you do not indulge in fermented liquors, Mr Blake, and my husband is never content without his glass of spirits and water after dinner, this seems as good an opportunity as any for our having a little private talk together upon a matter which affects our common interests. I daresay you would not object to give me half-an-hour of your society in the drawing-room.'

Mr Blake bowed profoundly. Claude Murphy's bright brown eyes opened to their fullest extent, and his lips emitted a long low whistle. Master Woodford, who was wallowing in the dessert, hastily wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and prepared to migrate to the drawing-room, for secrets were even dearer to him than preserved ginger.

'No, Woody,' said she, 'you will keep your father company; and if I catch you listening at the door, I'll box your ears.'

Ground-floor and first-floor, in one and the same dwelling-house, surely never held a more ill-assorted pair apiece, than did that dining-room and back drawing-room in Rhadegund Street upon the evening in question; the one containing Claude and his cub, the other Selina Murphy and her guest Valentine Blake. Between the former couple, there was little enough of talk; Claude sipped his whisky and water, smiling to himself at the ludicrous behaviour of Xantippe, or regarding Master Woody with half-shut derisive eyes, as that young gentleman roved from preserved ginger to damson cheese, like a horse which finds for the first time both bean-chest and corn-bin with their lids open.

'How very, very sick you'll be, Woody!' was all the remonstrance that passed the parental lips.

'Yes, pa,' replied the obsequious youth, helping himself to the last dregs of the last sweetmeat.

'You'll say it's me, of course, when your mother asks what has become of the dessert.'

'Thank you, pa, I will,' was the unexpectedly literal reply.

A very different sort of conversation was that which was going on above-stairs.

'Mr Valentine Blake,' said Selina, as soon as she had closed the back drawing-room door, 'I am well aware that my conduct must seem exceedingly strange, and to demand considerable explanation. My excuse must be, that in the matter about which I wish to speak with you—of vast importance in itself both to you and to me—there is not a day to be lost. And yet, before I begin to explain myself, I require to be certified of the sort of man with whom I am about to deal. I do not ask for your history. I care not from whence you sprang, or in what you have been engaged; but I wish to

hear from your own lips whether you possess the qualifications necessary for my purpose—which will, I promise you, if carried out, be greatly to your own advantage. You have been a soldier, Mr Blake; but are you a brave man? You have had soldiers under you; but have you a will of iron, so that when you say: "Obey me," it is sure to be done?"

'Madam,' returned Valentine Blake gravely, 'as to my courage, it is not becoming in me to speak of that; but I have been the close companion through years of battle with the Bravest Man in the World. As to my will, it has never failed to be obeyed, when I have had authority for its enforcement, notwithstanding that I have often had to deal with desperate and lawless men.'

'Ah!' remarked Selina with significance, 'perhaps you yourself and the law were not always upon the same side?'

'I was always upon the side of Right, madam,' replied the stranger calmly, 'which seems to me to be the highest law.'

'Very good, sir; I meant no offence. It is upon the side of right'—here her cold eyes kindled, and her thin fingers closed together tightly—'that I require you now to serve. It may be, at a future time, I shall need your aid to redress a wrong.'

'So far, madam,' observed Valentine Blake simply, 'I think I may say that I have qualifications for the task you propose for me.'

'You are friendless too, you tell me, sir,' continued Selina thoughtfully, 'and have no relatives with whom to gossip about other people's business through the post. That is also well.'

The stranger smiled.

'I mean, it is well for the prosecution of the matter that I have in my mind,' explained his hostess quite unabashed. 'In business-matters, all sentiment is out of place; and I honestly tell you, that I am glad that you are a lonely man. If you were one like my husband, hand-in-glove with every specious fellow you came across, and "hail-fellow-well-met," with every babbling drinker, you would not suit my plans. I daresay, if need were, now, you could keep a secret?'

'The lives of scores and scores of valiant men have more than once been preserved by my silence, madam, when the thumbscrew and the scourge in vain invited me to speak.'

'I can believe it, sir,' replied Selina with enforced admiration. 'You are one I do not doubt to stick to your colours; it is for that reason that I have chosen you to wear mine.'

Valentine Blake bowed stiffly. 'Madam, I have yet to learn the nature of the service you would impose upon me; except at sea, we rarely act under sealed orders.'

'And you are very poor,' continued Selina musing, and without noticing his last remark. 'That is well too. You would fain persuade me that you are honest also.—Nay, sir, I do not question it: where honesty and self-interest pull the same way, there is no need to do so. You will get nothing by betraying me: you will indeed have nothing to betray; whereas, by being true, you will gain much.'

'I shall be true, madam, never fear,' observed the stranger gravely. 'But you have not yet mentioned the nature of the occupation.'

'Let me first point out its advantages,' resumed his hostess quietly. 'In the first place, you will gain your livelihood: you will have board and

lodging and an ample income. That is something, is it not?'

'It is a great deal, madam, indeed. Forgive me, however, if I anticipate your proposition. I conclude that you are about to honour me with the offer of the post of tutor to your son. I regret to say I cannot accept that post. I do not intend to stay in town for any length of time.'

'My son does not need a tutor, sir, his education being perfected,' returned Selina starchy; 'and the situation which I am about to suggest for your acceptance is in the country—three hundred miles from London. You said that you had no objection to a private tutorship; you said that you could teach the rudiments of a commercial education. I am about to take you at your word. Now, look at this.' She pulled out from her pocket a newspaper, folded down so as to mark a particular advertisement, and placed it in his hands:

WANTED—a Resident Tutor for a Young Gentleman (etate 17) of wayward habits, and whose education has been neglected. No person without decided capabilities for the office need apply. Some knowledge of commercial routine indispensable. Address Herbert Warton, Esq., Sandalithwaite, Cumberland.

CHAPTER XXII.—FRANK AND CONFIDENTIAL.

While Valentine Blake was making himself acquainted with the advertisement, which he did with considerable deliberation, Mrs Murphy rose from her seat and paced the room, not from impatience of the delay, for she never even looked towards her companion, but for the sake of that relief which motion always seems to afford to the mind overcrowded with thoughts.

'Have you read it?' asked she at last, not stopping even then, although she threw one sharp glance at his face—'have you read it, and do you understand it?'

'Yes, madam,' returned the young man slowly. 'The paper is the *Commercial Times*, I see: a strange journal enough to find in an artist's drawing-room.'

'What is that to you?' replied Selina sharply, and coming to a sudden halt. 'However, if you want reasons, you shall have them. I—not my husband, mark me, but myself—I take that newspaper because it sometimes treats of matters in which I have a personal interest. It refers to property, now passed from me and mine, but which I once had reason to look upon as my own. It also often mentions by name a certain blood-relation.'

'With whom, to use your own expressive words, perhaps you do not gossip through the post,' returned the young man smiling.

'You are very right, sir,' answered Mrs Murphy coldly. 'The person I refer to and myself are far from being upon good terms—he is my brother.'

'The Mr Herbert Warton here referred to, I suppose?'

'No. I have every reason to believe, however—indeed, I am positively certain—that the advertisement in question emanates from a member of my family; from my brother, perhaps, or, as is more likely—here her features were contorted with a little spasm, and she jerked her words out one by one, as though each went nigh to choke her—'from my sister-in-law. Mr Warton is a friend of theirs, and very likely to be their adviser; but he has no children of his own.' Once more, Mrs Murphy resumed her walk, and this time with her fingers

playing with her bare and wrinkled throat, in a very unattractive manner indeed.

'Look you, Mr Blake,' said she, when she stopped again; 'I hate my brother, and I hate his wife, but I do not hate their child. I bear no malice to the lad whatever: why should I? True, he is the innocent cause that I and mine are poor instead of rich; that my Woodford is heir to his father's beggary instead of his uncle's wealth; but you and I, sir, wage no war against the innocent—nay, we wage no war at all. The message which you will bear is wholly one of peace.'

'Madam,' returned the young man quietly, 'without quite seeing, I confess, how the matter is to be brought about through the mediation of so humble an individual as myself, and a total stranger to all concerned, yet, if my services should prove the means of reconciling you to a brother, of healing an unnatural feud'—

'I should curse you, sir,' interposed Selina with energy, 'to my dying day. Let us be frank with one another throughout this matter. I never wish to think of Ernest Woodford otherwise than as the base and perfidious rogue I know him to be: I never wish to think of the woman he has twice taken to be his wife at all. But with regard to their son—my nephew—the case, as I have said, is different. You, who have no relatives, sir, may not be able to appreciate the saying that "Blood is thicker than water," but for my part I own, this spoiled, unhappy child—whom I have never seen, but the account of whose misdeeds has often reached my ears—awakens in me the deepest interest.'

Ashamed, perhaps, of the gentle emotions that might be observable in her features, Mrs Murphy set her face to the window, and turned her back upon her companion as she proceeded: "Of wayward habits," sir, says that advertisement; alas, the truth is, that this young man, the only relative now left me in the world, except my Woodford, is vicious and abandoned to the last degree. Without some such help as you can give him is speedily afforded, his ruin is certain; and the vast means of which he will be the possessor, will be the cause of innumerable evils to others as well as to himself. I know what sort of a bringing-up the poor lad must needs have had, and my heart has no room to spare for censure; pity for his present, and apprehension for his future, is all I feel.—Do I make my motives intelligible to you, Mr Blake?'

'Yes, indeed, madam,' returned the young man gravely; 'though such disinterestedness is rare. But how can you be sure that this appointment is not filled up, or that, if vacant, it will be given to one who has only your recommendation to back him?'

'It is not filled up, because the advertisement appeared in yesterday's paper for the first time, and in this journal only. It is so like my brother not to use the ordinary channels. You will find him wedded to commerce—and better for him if he had taken no other wife. Short-sighted, yet scheming fool!—What was I saying? Ah, the tutorship. You have credentials, testimonials of some sort, I conclude?—Good. Those and your priority of application will without doubt secure the post. Only, whatever you do, whether now or hereafter, see that you never breathe my name, or hint at having known me or my husband. To do so—no matter how sure you may deem your footing—would be to leave Dewbank Hall forthwith. There is a girl there, by the by—a woman she must be by this

time—about whom I should put you on your guard. Are you weak, Mr Valentine Blake, with respect to young-lady dolls?—I am sorry to see you blush: I should have thought you had been above such follies.'

'If I blush, madam, it is for another reason than that which your words imply. However charming this young lady may turn out on acquaintance, my affections are pre-engaged.'

'I am glad of it,' replied Mrs Murphy sharply; 'though she was not charming when I knew her, nor did she give any promise of being so. She was, however, a bold and obstinate child, likely enough to grow up both dangerous and designing.'

For the first time throughout their talk, there came into Valentine Blake's eyes a cold-blue gleam like the glitter of a sword.

'Is this young lady, too, a kinswoman of yours, madam?'

'Yes, sir.—You would say, perhaps, that I am unfortunate in my relatives. It was open to the girl I speak of to take her uncle's part or mine in the subject of our quarrel, and she preferred to take her uncle's.'

'Forgive me, madam, if I seem to push my curiosity too far, but it is my habit—induced, perhaps, by military training—to endeavour to make myself acquainted with the ground when venturing into a strange country. May I ask what was the subject of your quarrel?'

'There were many subjects, sir: whatever arose, we differed about, but the chief cause was an insolent, vexatious boy. He is dead now, so there is no need to speak of him.'

'And was that young gentleman a relation of yours also, madam?'

'Yes, sir.—You may smile, but I am not ashamed to say I loathed them all. I strove to do my duty by them, and I earned distrust—defiance! And I am not one to be defied without resenting it.—Do you understand?'

'Perfectly, madam. The more you tell me of these occurrences, the more I am astonished, not at your indignation, but at the unselfish interest you manifest in your unknown nephew: it seems as though the pent-up flood of natural affection, so often turned back from these unworthy channels, was seeking for its outlet in that neglected lad.'

'Very likely,' observed Selina drily. 'I have certainly no ill-will against the young man—Bentinck he is named, I believe, after some connection of his mother—nay, as I have said, I wish him well. I am doing the very best for him I can, Mr Blake, when I ask you to consent to be his tutor.'

The young man bowed with courteous gravity, but uttered no reply.

'You accept the compliment, but not the place,' observed Selina sharply.

'I did not say that, madam; but it struck me that you had not quite finished what you had to say—that you might have some condition to add, in case I should accept your offer.'

'I have mentioned that of secrecy,' returned Selina thoughtfully. 'It is understood that nobody shall know that I recommended you for the situation.'

'Nobody but your husband, madam; I am under some obligation to his kindness, and it is imperative that I should be frank with him in the matter.'

'And are you not under some obligation to me?' replied Mrs Murphy with irritation. 'Don't I give you the place? And can't I take it away from

you again—that is, could not I find means to let my brother know that you obtained it through my intervention?—Come, I don't wish to threaten you, Mr Blake. Let us be friends, by all means. But why should you acquaint my husband with this matter?

'Because, madam, even if he had not shewn himself my friend, I could not consent to share a secret with his wife unknown to him.'

'If you tell Mr Murphy, you may just as well tell all the world, sir. However, since you are so obstinate about it, you must have your way. It would be well to answer the advertisement to-night, so that your letter may leave town by the first post to-morrow morning.'

'Very well, madam; so let it be. Then there is absolutely no other condition?'

'None, sir; for what I have now to ask can scarcely be called by any such name—it is simply this: I shall require to hear from you at intervals a detailed account of all that takes place at Dewbank Hall.'

'Madam, whenever we caught a spy at Monte Video, returned the young man, 'it was our custom to hang him.'

'You did quite right,' assented Mrs Murphy cheerfully. 'You surely cannot imagine that I wish to put such an indignity on you as that at which you hint. I have no means of learning the state of affairs in a house that was once my home; I have had no information for nearly twenty years of how things have been going on at Sandalithwaite; I have never even set eyes upon this lad Bentinck Woodford, in whom, as you say, I feel so lively an interest—is it then to be wondered at that I wish to seize this opportunity to learn something of all these things? Indeed, I am not concerned with what may be going on at present, or with what may happen in future at Dewbank Hall, half so much as with the past. I should like, above all things, to hear from you the occurrences which have taken place there during my absence—especially shall I welcome anything you may have to tell me about Bentinck. You may even dwell upon his personal appearance; let me know if he resembles his mother or his father, or anybody else in the parish, for I know everybody at Sandalithwaite, and shall understand a likeness of that sort better than any mere description: and I should like to know something about the man who inserts this advertisement—Dr Herbert Warton. I don't mind telling you, Mr Blake, that he was once a would-be flame of mine. I daresay over his liquor—for I am sorry to say he is not so abstemious as you are—he will boast to you of the opportunity which he once had of making what would have been for him quite a splendid alliance; don't contradict him, pray. Encourage him, rather, for my sake, for he is the greatest gossip in all Cumberland, and will tell you more of what I want to know than a whole file of county papers. It may be weak and foolish to wish to be acquainted with such matters, but then I am a Woman, Mr Blake. I demand no breach of confidence; no spy-work, such as you naturally revolt against—do I?' And Selina Murphy regarded her companion with a look uncommonly like those enticing ones with which she used to favour Claude in the day of her courtship of that victim, allowance only being made for the lapse of years. The enraptured cockatoo was moulting: Selina was getting a little bald.

'Really, Mrs Murphy, I do not see how I can

resist you further,' replied Valentine Blake with gravity. 'There can, as you say, be no harm in what you request of me; a London newspaper editor might ask as much of his country correspondent.'

'Just so,' replied Selina eagerly; 'and he would also remunerate you for your trouble. Your remark relieves me from some embarrassment upon that score.' She fumbled in her pocket for a moment, to separate a single five-pound note from a little packet of them which she had held in readiness there from the first. It was as though Marsyas should have been compelled to peel off his own epidermis, but she did at last detach the outside bank-note, which she held up (as a niggardly uncle might proffer a cheap sweetmeat to a child) before the young man's astonished eyes. 'You must allow me to offer you this retaining-fee,' said she, 'and then I shall be sure you will never advocate the other side.'

'Madam,' returned Valentine Blake stiffly, 'I am no lawyer, but a soldier who takes his pay (when he can get it), but does not stoop to plunder. Believe me, I shall do my duty both to you and to my employers without a bribe.'

A Y T O U N.

THERE are some writers who, although by no means in the first rank of men of letters, are more regretted when we lose them than men much more eminent. Geniality has greater force than genius in attaching mankind to its professors. When, too, a professor of literature is also a partisan, his opponents, when he is dead, forget his rancour, only remembering what good fruit he bore; while his allies estimate his talents all the higher for the leaning which he had towards their side. Thus it is with William Edmondstone Aytoun. His sympathies were not wide; he lived retired; his ideas—or, at all events, the expression of them—were confined by choice within comparatively narrow limits; fighting in a small arena, with few antagonists worthy of his steel, he had as to politics an exaggerated notion of his own powers; but his ballads have the ring of the true metal; his humour was genuine, his satire trenchant, and not so coarse as that of the politico-literary school of which he was perhaps the last disciple. He had a large and loving heart, too, as is shewn by his friend and collaborateur, Mr Theodore Martin, in the interesting Memoir he has recently published* of his dead ally. It is no wonder, therefore, that while the public regret him, a considerable section of it regard his early demise as a personal loss.

William Edmondstone Aytoun was born in Edinburgh in 1813, the only son of Roger Aytoun, a Writer to the Signet. His father was a Whig; and he himself, like many another now 'strong Conservative'—such as Mr Disraeli and Lord Derby—entertained in early life opinions that were not merely Whiggish, but downright Radical. His mother, however, was his teacher. 'To marked originality of character, she added superior culture. Early left an orphan, her youth was spent with her grand-uncle, Mr Alexander Keith of Ravelstone, who had adopted her. She was in the habit of reading to him works of a kind far beyond the usual range of a young girl's studies; and having a very retentive memory, her mind was well stored

* *Memoir of William Edmondstone Aytoun.* By Theodore Martin. Edinburgh: Blackwood.

with the treasures both of poetry and prose. Mrs Keith was the grand-aunt of Walter Scott, who was a constant visitor at Ravelstone. His sister, Anne Scott, was Miss Keir's earliest and most intimate friend, and she saw much of Scott himself at Ravelstone when a boy. Some of the anecdotes of his youthful days, which are recorded in Lockhart's life of the poet, were supplied by Mrs Aytoun; but so sensitive was she about appearing in any public way, that she would not allow her name to be attached to them. She was herself a stanch Jacobite; and some of her kindred had been out both in the '15 and the '45. From old aunts and other relatives who had been involved in the troubles of the latter period, she had gathered innumerable stories of romantic interest, which she both told and wrote with great spirit. It was from her that her son took his love of the White Rose. From her, too, he imbibed, as Burns did from the recitations of his mother, his deep devotion to the ballad poetry of Scotland. Indeed, in respect of minstrel lore, she would, like the Eppie Osett of *Norman Sinclair*, "have put Ritson and Leyden to shame. She could not only repeat such fine historical ballads as *The Battle of Otterburn* and *Sir Patrick Spens*, but she knew by heart most of the beautiful romantic ditties current on the Border, and she gave them forth with an animation and pathos that produced the strongest effect upon her audience." To the last, Mrs Aytoun retained this faculty; and in 1857, when her son was preparing his edition of the *Ballads of Scotland*, he would come to her for help when he found himself at a loss to fill up some hiatus, or staggered by some false reading, and she was pretty sure to supply the right reading or the missing verse.' This interesting old lady had then reached the age of eighty-four.

Aytoun had the inestimable advantage of being brought up in the country, and his wits developed themselves naturally, without that 'forcing' in early youth which has been so fatal to so many modern writers. In his love of external nature, and faculty of describing it, he was almost equal to his father-in-law, Christopher North himself, although he had not his wondrous spirits. He learned to handle rod and gun, too, at an early age, and was therefore enabled, in his later holiday times, to turn to wholesome exercise for amusement, instead of being tempted to dissipation.

'His love of reading was very early shewn, and a book was his constant companion. When about the age of nine or ten, he would stretch himself, with a volume of the Scott novels, on the hearth-rug, face downwards, for hours, and shout and scream with delight over the humour of the characters. His reading was very apt to take a direction of which his mother did not altogether approve. *The Devil on Two Sticks*, or *Humphrey Clinker*, surreptitiously taken from his father's library, were just the books which his keen sense of humour was sure to find especially attractive, to the prejudice of graver studies; and he had often to do battle to save them from being thrown by her into the fire.' His later studies, even while but a youth, were varied and extensive; and from a comparatively early age he seems to have marked out for himself not only his future course of life, but actually fixed upon the very university chair to which he was afterwards appointed. He read, indeed, at his father's wish, for the profession of the Law, both in Edinburgh and London, but that

pursuit was very uncongenial to him; he was much more in his element at Aschaffenburg, prosecuting his studies in German literature with marked success, and (in process of time) writing to his mother about ways and means with regard to publishing a translation by himself of Goethe's *Faust*. His Scotch training held out for a considerable time against German ways. He goes indeed to two masked-balls, both given on Sundays, but he saves his conscience by a nationally characteristic device—namely, 'by staying at home till twelve chappit. There,' writes he, 'are both piety and ingenuity for you!' In a few more weeks, he is converted, or perverted (let our readers choose for themselves), to the foreign method of observing Sunday. 'The people here [that is, at Aschaffenburg] are certainly more religious, and attend far better to public worship than the generality in Britain, a circumstance which I must attribute to their very different way of passing the Sunday. With us, it is in vain to deny that it is little better than a day of penance, and, to say the truth, I have generally found it tolerably wearisome in Edinburgh. Here, it is a day both of religion and relaxation, &c.

In 1835, Aytoun was admitted as a Writer to the Signet in his father's firm; but after five years of unsatisfactory experience in that calling, he exchanged it for the bar. But he still clung to literature, which indeed welcomed him much more cordially than law. He got but few briefs, and he wrote much for *Blackwood*. In 1836, he published in that magazine several translations from Uhland; and in 1839, his beautiful poem, *Hermotimus*. It was in 1841 that he first made the acquaintance of his present biographer, who was then publishing some humorous papers, with the now well-known signature of Bon Gaultier attached to them. In these papers appeared the ballads which have tickled so many of us so pleasantly; and it was agreed between the friends that they should in future aid one another in their production. It has been a much-debated question among lovers of Bon Gaultier's *Book of Ballads* to which author—Martin or Aytoun—we are indebted for each particular ballad, and for the first time we have here got the matter settled. 'Some of the best,' says modest Mr Martin, 'were exclusively Aytoun's, such as *The Massacre of The M'Pherson*, *The Rhyme of Sir Lancelot Bogle*, *The Broken Pitcher*, *The Red Friar and Little John*, *The Lay of Mr Colt*, and that best of all imitations of the Scottish ballad, *The Queen in France*. Some were wholly mine, and the rest were produced by us jointly. Fortunately for our purpose, there were then living not a few poets whose style and manner of thought were sufficiently marked to make imitation easy, and sufficiently popular for a parody of their characteristics to be readily recognised. Macaulay's *Lays of Rome* and his two other fine ballads were still in the freshness of their fame. Lockhart's *Spanish Ballads* were as familiar in the drawing-room as in the study. Tennyson and Mrs Browning were opening up new veins of poetry. These, with Wordsworth, Moore, Uhland, and others of minor note, lay ready to our hands—as Scott, Byron, Crabbe, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey had done to James and Horace Smith in 1812, when writing the *Rejected Addresses*. Never, probably, were verses thrown off with a keener sense of enjoyment. In writing them, we had no thought of the public; and it was a pleasant surprise to us when we found how

rapidly they became popular, not only in England, but also in America, which had come in for no small share of severe though well-meant ridicule. It was precisely the poets whom we most admired that we imitated the most frequently. This was not certainly from any want of reverence, but rather out of the fulness of our admiration, just as the excess of a lover's fondness often runs over into raillery of the very qualities that are dearest to his heart. "Let no one," says Heine, "ridicule mankind unless he loves them." With no less truth may it be said: Let no one parody a poet unless he loves him. He must first be penetrated by his spirit, and have steeped his ear in the music of his verse, before he can reflect these under a humorous aspect with success.

The co-operation of these congenial spirits was not confined to verse, and indeed they wrote so much together and so much alike, that at last he was a wise author who could recognise for certain his own literary offspring.

The Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers, by far Aytoun's greatest work, was, however, all his own. His biographer contends that, if influenced by any other writer at the outset of his labours in this direction, it was not by Macaulay (as one would certainly have concluded) but by Wilhelm Müller, a German poet of small fame. But the *Burial March of Dundee* and *Charles Edward at Versailles*, the first two of the lays, without doubt, owe much of their melancholy to the death of Aytoun's father, which took place in 1843, the date of their first publication. The spirit of these ballads is, as everybody knows, more Stuartish than were the Stuarts themselves; and this feeling seems really to have been genuine with Aytoun. He did believe in Mary Stuart, and yet for certain was neither knave nor fool. Upon the virtues of that good-looking princess he was always ready to expatiate, and to do battle with her enemies; nay, where the rude hand of the satirist was laid upon her memory, he could make use of sarcasm in its defence that was the reverse of good-natured; as when, after hearing one of Thackeray's *Lectures on the Georges*, wherein she was irreverently handled, he remarked: 'Stick to your Jeameses, Thackeray! they are more in your line than the Georges.' This sort of severity was, however, very rare in Aytoun, whose humour was, above all things, kindly; and notwithstanding that dangerous observation, Thackeray and he continued fast friends. A curious letter from the former is published by Mr Martin, written so late as 1847, in which the great novelist expresses his desire to see a notice of his work in the magazine of which Aytoun was (erroneously) supposed to be the editor. 'Why don't *Blackwood* give me an article? Because he refused the best story I ever wrote!' Colburn refused the present *Novel without a Hero*, and if any man at *Blackwood's* or Colburn's, and if any man since—fiddle-de-dee. Upon my word and honour, I never said so much about myself before: but I know this, if I had the command of *Blackwood*, and a humorous person like Titmarsh should come up and labour hard and honestly (please God) for ten years, I would give him a hand.' A fortnight later, however, Thackeray's better judgment advises him 'to withdraw' the above request; and indeed, it is almost inconceivable that, at such a date, at all events—

namely, after the publication of *Vanity Fair*, he should have written it.

The letters set before us from Aytoun himself are good, and indeed excellent for a literary man—who commonly keep their best things for the public, and leave their friends only the gleanings. In one of these epistles he makes a remark which has certainly lost none of its force by the lapse of years.

'What a mess,' he says, 'politics are in. It is a very hard thing that we cannot form a ministry without having in it several Jonahs. Now, I don't object to one Jonah, because it may be convenient to have a fellow to pitch overboard on extraordinary emergency; but if half the crew are Jonahs, it strikes me the operation of getting rid of them is very much like walking the plank.'

Again, he tenders the following humorous advice to a military professor at the Staff College: 'Why not lecture in a suit of armour of the twelfth century, which, besides its appropriateness to the office, would have this advantage—that when at a loss for a word or an argument, you could let down the vizor, and allow your voice to be lost in the hollow of the helmet.' And again, writing from Kirkwall (after he was made sheriff, and placed in very comfortable circumstances), he indites this humorous account of his newly purchased stud: 'We have got two ponies—a very pretty chestnut one for Mrs Aytoun, which we have not yet named, and a bay horse, which formerly carried a deceased minister of the Establishment. His trot is of the hard, Calvinistic kind, distressing to the os coccygis, and jolting like the divisions of a fast-day discourse. I have to rise perpendicularly in the stirrups at his "fifteenthly." But I have purveyed me a strong Episcopal whip, and in the course of a few days, I hope to teach *Ecclesiastes* some prelatial paces.'

The last published example of Aytoun's genuine gift of humour is to be found in *Firmilian*, which although intended as a vehicle for satirising the 'spasmodic school,' contains also some excellent and sterling poetry. *Firmilian* has set himself a great task—the composition of 'Cain, a Tragedy,' and he feels himself unable to paint the pangs of the first fratricide, until a preliminary murder shall have given him a notion of remorse.

What we write

Must be the reflex of the thing we know;
For who can limn the morning, if his eyes
Have never looked upon Aurora's face?
Or who describe the cadence of the sea,
Whose ears were never open to the waves,
Or the shrill winding of the Triton's horn?
What do I know as yet of homicide?
Nothing. Fool—fool! to lose thy precious time
In dreaming of what may be, when an act,
Easy to plan, and easier to effect,
Can teach thee everything! What! craven mind,
Shrink'st thou from doing, for a noble aim,
What, every hour, some villain, wretch, or slave
Dares for a purse of gold? It is resolved—
I'll ope the lattice of some mortal cage,
And let the soul go free.

Nothing of the sort, since De Quincey's essay upon *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*, excels, in our opinion, the above. Even less generally known than *Firmilian* is the *Elder's Warning*, a *Lay of the Convocation*, yet, in its way, it is equally admirable.

'Noo, John Makgill, my elder, come listen to my word,
It's time to leave the harrows, it's time to draw the sword;
The sheep may wander on the hill, the stots rout in the byre—
But another path is ours, John, through danger and through fire.
The cloud o' tribulation that we hae lang foreseen
Has gathered ower the land, John, like mists that rise at e'en;
The palings o' oor vineyard are gey near broken down,
An' the bits o' vines are trampled by greedy laird and loun.
The auld Erastian lords have put their feet upon oor necks,
And oor chalders they have dwindled to little mair than pecks;
Thae weary interlocutors come pelting every day,
And the bills and the expenses are mair than we can pay.
But what is waur nor a', John, while thus distressed we stand,
Black Prelacy is crawling like pushion through the land—
The scarlet woman will be here to sit within oor ha'.
For when ye see a Bishop, John, the Paip's no far awa'.
They'll soon be here to tithe ye—they'll tithe both stot and stirk;
O! waes me for the Covenant, and waes me for the Kirk!
They're ettling for the manses, John—they're ettling fast and fain;
And they'll be bringing Tam Dalyell and Claverse back again.
But we'll meet them on the ground, John, whaur we met them ance afore,
And pay thae weary Moderates a black and bitter score.
Sae lang's we're a' united, it winna do to bow
To the cankered Lords o' Session, and their wigs o' plastered tow,
We'll gather on the hills, John—we'll gather far and near—
And Candlish he will lead the van, and Cunning-
ham the rear;
We'll think o' Bothwell Brig, John, and the Raid o' Rullion Green;
We'll shew them that we lo'e the Kirk far better nor the Queen.
Our Zion is in danger, sae tak' your auld claymore;
And tak' ye down the rauchan that hangs ahint the door,
And put your braid blue bannet on, an' we'll daunder up the glen,
And meet the bauld Conventicle, as our fathers did, ye ken'.
Auld John Makgill he listened, and whiles he wat his thumb,
And whiles took up the cuttie-pipe that lay beside the lum,
And whiles he keekit in the pat that held the simmering kail;
But ne'er a bit he lifted his rauchan frae the nail.

'Nae doot, nae doot! an awfu' case! the times are unco hard,
And sae you're thinking, minister, to leave your ain kail-yard,
And the bonny manse and stipend, that was worth twa hundred pund—
And the Netherhaugh glebe-acres—its grand potato-ground!
An' awfu' dispensation! I canna say ye're wrang,
For gin ye think ye shu'dna stop, ye're very right to gang.

And sae the Lords have beat the Kirk? that's wae fu' news to tell;
Ye'se hae my blessing, minister, but I canna gae mysel'.
My auld claymore's just useless, it's rusted fu' o' holes—
Indeed, the bairns have broke it wi' hacking at the coals.
The rheumatiz is in my back—I canna tell how sair—
An' I got my death wi' driving the beasts to Hallow Fair.
I'm no the body that I was—ye ken I'm getting auld;
And as for lying out o' doors, the nights are dismal cauld!
Ye'll need a gude thick greatcoat 'gin ye're ganging up to sleep
In the bare and broken heather, 'mang the moor-cocks and the sheep.
Ye'll find it's warmer lying, gif ye lie down heads and thraws,
Wi' the ither noble gentlemen that winna thole the laws,
I'm verra laith to lose ye, and so is Jenny here—
There's no a better-liket man in ony parish near;
But gin the case is pressing, I wadna dare to say,
Ye'd better take a thought on't, and bide anither day.
'Twill be an unco comfort, when the nights are cauld and mirk,
To think that ye are chosen to suffer for the Kirk.
For me it's clean impossible—ye ken I'm auld and frail;
But surely, sir, afore ye gang, ye'll stop and taste our kail'.

Now, glad should be our minister that he called at John Makgill's,
For costly he kept the manse, and never took the hills.

It is to such extracts as the above that the memoirs of Aytoun owe their chief charm, notwithstanding Mr Martin's undoubted fitness for the task of biographer. And so with a man of letters it should be. There was nothing of excitement or sensation in our author's life-history. He had no struggles for the bare life, as his less fortunate brethren of the pen have often had; he had not even to fight for fame. It came to him gradually but surely. He lived to be one of the foremost men of letters in his own country, one of the most sought-after citizens of his own town, its capital; and he was satisfied. Colonel Hamley has drawn an admirable sketch of his home-life.

'The poet's life was very far indeed from being in unison with the stormy career of his hero Bothwell, or the heroic endurance and adventure of Montrose and Dundee, for nothing could be easier than his existence. His excellent wife, herself of a disposition and qualities to illuminate any household, whose kind, bright, genial face was the faithful index of her heart, took care that his home should always be of the cosiest and pleasantest, and made his friends her own. Among other comfortable circumstances, he was treated by his lady-friends with a pleasant deference; his graceful poetry, the nature of its subjects, picturesque and chivalrous, and his Jacobitism, all appealed to their imaginations, and his soft and gentle manners confirmed the spell. In the careless ease of his household life, he rarely made his appearance early in the morning, and on coming down stairs proceeded to his study, where he passed most of the day until it was time to start for his lecture at four o'clock.

I once accompanied him to his lecture-room and sat beside him, while in front of us gathered an audience most respectfully attentive, and who, somewhat to my surprise, evinced their approval of certain brilliant passages of the discourse by a loud and general clattering of their feet. Lecturing no doubt was a pleasure to him, and he did it well; but another portion of his duties must have been less congenial, for I used to see his table loaded for weeks together with the books in which the members of his class wrote their essays, and which he was at great pains to correct. . . . He was a delightful companion, never disputatious, ready at the give and take which is the charm of social talk, conversant with an immense range of subjects, and apt to illustrate all by some of those quaint humorous turns which are the distinctive feature of his articles.'

This is a pleasant picture, not only in itself, but as evidencing the easy circumstances and agreeable existence of a man whom the public had much cause for wishing well. Mr Aytoun married twice; but died without issue, at Blackhills, Elgin, on the 4th of August 1865, at the age of fifty-two.

MARRIED WELL.

IN NINETEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER XV.—'WOOD, AN' MARRIED, AN' A'.'

'GALLOP apace, ye fiery-footed steeds,' and bring in night after night until the short period is accomplished between the beginning and the end of Nelly's engagement, ended only by the substitution of a closer tie. What need to dilate upon the wedding? The hypochondriac insisted upon giving the bride away, and he performed that tolerably simple duty with a groan and an air which bore witness to his strong repugnance; Augusta and Caroline Platt were in the height of glory as bride-maids (though they considered Nelly had married beneath her); Mrs Platt wept genially in a pew, where Dr Snell took copious snuff; the bride looked her worst (as is usual on such occasions); the Echo sat in a pew by herself, and performed the part to be expected of her in the matter of responses; the bridegroom looked a solemn promise never to do such a thing again; the clergyman evidently felt for them all; and the voice of the clerk was loud and cordial, and his expressive eye spoke the firmness of his pecuniary hopes. The breakfast, which took place at the Grimshaws', went off beautifully, nobody having any appetite, the champagne creating a sort of laughing-gas-hilarity, the speeches being extremely touching, and the bridesmaids being dissolved in tears. At length the mystic carriage came with the mystic gray horses, and the guests prepared for the rite of throwing the mystic slipper. But, ere the bride departed, old Grimshaw begged her to walk into his study. He closed the door, and taking her affectionately by the hand, he said: 'You will think it odd, my dear, that I alone have made you no present.'

'Oh, pray, sir,' said Nelly tearfully, 'pray, don't, don't!'

'Do you recollect, my dear,' broke in the hypochondriac, 'what an argument we had once about my niece Jemima?'

'Oh, please, Mr Grimshaw, do not allude on such an occasion!'

'My dear, I *shall* allude. Your words had more effect upon me than I chose at the time to admit; but now, if I have judged your nature rightly, I think you will value my wedding-present more than any you have received: look here!'

He drew out a parchment, at which Nelly looked, and saw that old Grimshaw had once more altered his will, and had left Jemima two thousand pounds instead of the original one.

'That,' said the hypochondriac, 'is my wedding-present in the shape of a tribute to your independent spirit, your sense, your love of justice, and your kind heart.'

'Oh, how *very* good of you!' was all Nelly could say as she put her two hands in his, and held up her tearful face, as if asking for the kiss which he imprinted gravely and paternally, adding with a trembling voice: 'And now, my child, farewell, and God be with you!'

The honeymoon was short, but oh, so sweet! Nelly was soon established in the curate's house as the curate's wife; and with love and labour amongst the poor, she was happy as the day was long. Happier still she had hopes of being, when less than a year had passed, and a welcome cry was heard from one who might some day call her mother; and on the very day when her first-born was laid in her arms, the old rector with nine toes in the grave was pronounced by the doctor to have the tenth in the same predicament.

There had been a great deal of laughing when, in deference to the strong recommendation of the hypochondriac (who growled, 'Don't shout before you're out of the wood'), Nelly's own fortune of twenty pounds a year was settled 'entirely' on herself (as the laughers sarcastically remarked); and now it seemed more laughable still when Ewart had come into his living worth six hundred a year. Ah! he was a lucky man (said worldlings openly, and ecclesiastics to one another); and there could now be little doubt but that Nelly had married well.

CHAPTER XVI.—A PITIFUL STORY.

Whom does Time halt withal? With the weary and heavy-laden; with the sorrowful and suffering; with the satiate and purposeless; with the sick of hope deferred; with the debtor besieged of duns; with the creditor baffled of his due; with the suitor in search of justice; with the prisoner to whom death were a boon; with the parents of erring children; with the wives of sottish men. All such count drearily the leaden moments; all such, in the morning, think, 'Would God it were even;' and at even, think, 'Would God it were morning.' Yet, if your gait must needs be halting, hobble away, old Time, as quickly as you may through years of mourning for the traitorously slain—through years of fear not vainly felt, and of doubts, alas! too surely realised—through years of debt, disgrace, and shame—through years of love cooling down into loathing. Hobble away, old Time, and arrive as soon as you may at that glorious evening in a certain September when Fortress and I sat chatting together and smoking our pipes as the sun went down. It was a little more than ten years since he had left England; and he had returned from India a man of some note. He was a Major and a V. C.; he had been through the

mutiny, and his experiences had left their mark upon him in a decrease of the merry twinkle, and an increase of the fierce gleam of his gray-blue eye, in the lines upon his face, in the streaks of white amongst his darkened hair, and in his hollow, sun-burned cheeks; his manly air had grown still manlier; his shoulders were broader; his carriage was, if possible, more upright; his step was heavier and firmer; and his voice, though mellow as ever, was deeper and more melancholy. It passed through my thoughts, as I looked at him, that a woman who had liked him before his departure, could be easily induced to love him now. His sentiments were frank and generous as ever; and so far as his nature was concerned, it was clear that it did not give the lie to his motto, *Semper idem*. In one respect, however, he shewed a change, not of nature, I verily believe, but merely of practice. Whenever we touched, which was certainly not often, upon religious points, he omitted all the scepticism and the sneers for which he had been notorious, and even—amongst parson-loving ladies especially—infamous, and spoke in such a manner as to prove that his former attitude did not arise from the motive to which it had been generally attributed, but merely from impatience of dogmatism and hypocrisy. After discoursing much about old times, I asked him suddenly: 'Do you remember Ellen Finch?—the little goldfinch, as some fellows used to call her, on the principle, I suppose, on which *lucius* is said to be derived, for she was not much troubled with gold.'

Fortress started, and looked keenly at me, and then answered carelessly: 'O yes, quite well. Let's see, she married well, didn't she?'

'Deuced well,' said I bitterly.

Fortress now assumed an air of the greatest interest, put down his pipe, laid his arms on the table, and shooting across at me from wide-opened eyes a whole battery of surprise, exclaimed: 'Why, I had the paper sent me with the announcement of the marriage in it; and one of my sisters wrote me a long letter about it, and said that the "lovely Miss Finch had found another profitable lunatic in the Ewart family" (and I thought the expression scarcely warrantable), and had married him, and that she was considered to have married exceedingly well, as her husband was likely in a very short time to have a living of six hundred a year. Of course the man was the George Ewart who was at our college (in fact, the paper left no doubt about that). I hadn't much opinion of the man, I confess, but I supposed he would be all right when he was married. Didn't he get the living?'

'O yes, within a year of his marriage.'

'He always was a lucky brute in matters of speculation,' growled Fortress. 'What was it, then?' he added with some hesitation; 'she—she—she liked him, didn't she?'

'She liked all persons,' said I, 'and she was said to go beyond liking with him.'

'You don't mean to say he got tired of her?' rejoined Fortress, as if he were propounding the case of a man who could 'doubt truth to be a liar.'

'No, not exactly,' said I; 'but don't you recollect my writing out to you and describing the way in which Ewart was preparing for ordination?'

'Yes; it was just like the fellow,' answered Fortress.

'Well, soon after he entered upon his living, finding himself with more income than he had possessed as a curate, having little or no parish-

work to do, and his wife being much occupied with her first baby, and therefore unable to accompany him everywhere, as she had been in the habit of doing, he took to running up to town, at first now and then, and afterwards very often. In fact, it was not long before he was to be met nearly every week at the club, and after a while he was there nearly every day. It leaked out in course of time that the acquaintance with Mr Whiskybottle had been renewed.'

'Good God!' broke in Fortress, as if he had been for once in his life really alarmed.

'And you know,' I continued, 'what that was likely to end in. But you would hardly guess what Churton told me.'

'Churton was a good fellow,' said Fortress; 'what did he tell you?'

'You know Ewart believed in Churton, and would stand more from Churton than from anybody else. Well, after Ewart had been married about seven years, Churton was staying at the rectory. He had been there over and over again, and Mrs Ewart regarded him not only as her husband's best friend, but almost as her own brother; indeed, the children call him Uncle Churton. Many a time he had noticed during his visits that Mrs Ewart had turned quite pale when her husband had said it was time for her to go to bed, and that he and Churton would just have a pipe and a "tumbler" before they went too. She would look appealingly at Churton, and her lips would move as if she wished to say something, but that something for a long while came to nothing more than a sigh-accompanied "good-night." Still, Churton is by no means dull; and he therefore took care to confine himself to one tumbler, to ask for his candle immediately afterwards, and to suggest to Ewart the propriety of turning in. It is difficult for the oldest friend to do more with his host, especially when your host answers your suggestion by saying: "All right, old friend; I'll just smoke half a pipe, see that the house is safe, and follow your example." Generally, Ewart was as good as his word; but upon more than one occasion, Churton had reason to believe that the half-pipe had been considerably exceeded, at the insinuations of Mr Whiskybottle: he would, long after he had been in bed, hear Ewart soliloquising in a loud voice, laughing to himself, replying angrily to Mrs Ewart's gentle remonstrance that he would wake the children, and that it was getting very late, and at last coming unsteadily up-stairs with a rattle and clatter which afforded a fair presumption that the moderator lamp was being used as a bedroom candle, and that the choice of accidents lay between smashing the globe and setting the house on fire. But such was Ewart's tact or luck, that no accident happened, and such was his wonderful constitution, that, though he might be a little late, he looked in the morning as fresh and bright and *débonnaire* as ever. Mrs Ewart, however, looked like the ghost of herself; and when Churton one morning, as they sat waiting for Ewart, told her so, she burst into tears, and said: "Oh, Mr Churton, pray do what you can for him. You do not know what a house this is when you are not here; you wouldn't believe me if I were to tell you all. He is so much better when you are here—how I wish you could be here oftener! and then, the strange part is that he seems to have forgotten all about it the next morning; and I am sure nobody in the parish

(except the doctor, and he knows) dreams of such a thing; for it's *always* at night—it's that horrible sitting alone at night. Pray, pray do what you can for him."

"He did, I'll be bound," broke in Fortress—"he did all a man could, I'm sure. If I thought he didn't"—

"He did, he did," said I interrupting; "and now to continue and end. Churton had got an additional hold, because Ewart had confided to him—what had been systematically concealed from Mrs Ewart—that the frequent visits to town, the dinners at the club, and their sequences, if not consequences, had created a load of debt the amount of which was alarming, of which Mrs Ewart knew scarcely more than that her husband's income vanished mysteriously, and from which he was at his wits' end to extricate himself; for Mr Whiskybottle had done part of his work, and undermined some of Ewart's strongest points. Churton availed himself of all his influence, and flattered himself for some time—not without some reason—that he had done no little good. However, the last time Churton stayed at the rectory, he had retired one night to bed, and being unusually tired, had soon fallen asleep. At what hour he does not know, but whilst it was yet dark, he was awakened by a touch; he started up, and there stood by him a figure which, under certain circumstances, would have excited his admiration as well as his astonishment. It was Mrs Ewart, as she had risen from sleep, with a bedroom candle in her hand. She had never, Churton said, looked so lovely, but there was a horror upon her face which held him spell-bound, and under one of her eyes was a livid mark"—

"The blackguard had never struck her?" broke in Fortress, doubling his fist, but speaking in the tone of one pleading to be spared. "You don't mean that he had struck her?"

"Accidentally, if at all, Churton believes, and so do I; but, of course, Churton was obliged to be very delicate in his questioning, and she professed not to be aware that she had received any kind of blow in any way. However, she stood, as I have described, by Churton's bedside, and said in a voice which, Churton says, has haunted him since: "Pray, pray come to George." Then she went out; and Churton, as you may suppose, was not many seconds behind her. He found Ewart talking to himself about burglars, hitting out in all directions, and with one leg already over the sill of an open window, the drop from which should have killed a man. Churton is a powerful fellow, as you know, but he did not attempt force; he simply put his arm round Ewart's, and spoke cheerfully to him; and Ewart, at the sound of the old, familiar, influential voice, suffered himself to be led to his bedside. Then, a fit again seized him, and it was all that Churton and Mrs Ewart could do to hold him, and coax him to remain where he was till the doctor could come to see him."

I paused.

"Well," asked Fortress, drawing a deep breath, "and did he get over it?"

"Yes."

"And how is he now?"

"Dead."

Fortress started up from his seat; then, sitting down again, he asked: "How long has he been dead?"

"About six months."

"And how did he leave Mrs Ewart provided for?"

"She has her own little fortune," said I sardonically, "which was settled entirely upon herself."

"I thought she had nothing," said Fortress with surprise.

"O yes; she had twenty pounds a year," said I, "at least so it was reported; and even that must have been a help, for all the laughing over the settlement."

Fortress scowled at me as if he were going to hold me accountable for either the smallness of the sum or my manner of speaking; but a sad smile suddenly took the place of the scowl as he asked: "How many children are there?"

"Three: one boy about ten, another about six, and a little girl about four."

"And how in the world does she manage to bring them up?"

"Ewart's relatives take the two boys, and the little girl is allowed to be with her."

"Allowed, indeed! and who, pray, is so kind as to allow a mother to keep her child? I don't see the great charity of taking care of the two boys, if they are torn away from their mother."

"She would not be allowed to have them where she has gone."

"Confound it all! my good fellow, what do you mean? You speak as if she had gone to the workhouse—Ewart's friends could never"—

"She has gone to a sort of workhouse"—

"For God's sake, old fellow," broke in Fortress, jumping up and walking about the room, "don't speak riddles. Where has she gone to?"

"She has gone to teach music and I don't know what else, at a boarding-school, where, as a great favour, she is allowed to have her little girl with her."

"And how long has she been there?"

"Nearly three years."

"Why!" exclaimed Fortress in blank astonishment, "you told me Ewart had been dead only six months."

"That is so: but you haven't heard the worst part of the story even now."

"Then," said Fortress, sitting down doggedly, "out with it at once, please, short and strong."

"After that night when Churton was there, they never lived together again." (A grunt of assent from Fortress.) "Ewart was ill a long while; his creditors grew unmanageable, and, when he recovered, his living was sequestered. He hadn't a brass farthing. His relatives subscribed enough to put him with a man who advertises his wishes to "meet with a few gentlemen of incurably intemperate habits" to keep in order, took the two boys, and refused to do any more. Mrs Ewart was thankful to take the situation which old Dr Snell got for her, and has been there ever since."

"Do you know her address?"

"Yes; I have called upon her with Churton."

"Will you give it me?"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world." And I wrote it down and gave it him. Fortress took it with many thanks, wished me good-night, and went his way.

CHAPTER XVII.—MRS EWART AT HOME.

Not many weeks after this, Churton and I, to our common astonishment, received an invitation to go and drink tea with Mrs Ewart. Her letters were dated, not from the school, but from a certain cottage in the neighbourhood of Norwood. Of

course we compared notes, and put our heads together, but could make little or nothing by that. Perhaps she had suddenly come into money; perhaps she had married one of the masters at the school (but then she would not have signed her letters Ellen Ewart); perhaps she had discovered a relation of her father or mother; perhaps Ewart's friends had received supernatural warning (nothing less would have moved them) to behave handsomely, and had (with much grumbling, of course) obeyed. It was all 'perhaps.' Fortress we had both seen several times in the interval, but the only allusion he ever made to the subject of Mrs Ewart, was to say more than once: 'I haven't called; I couldn't make up my mind to call.' It seemed useless to ask whether he knew anything about the matter; so we went to our tea-drinking bewildered and expectant. We found Mrs Ewart in a state of high delight: she had her three children with her, the eldest boy being at a day-school in the neighbourhood; she was mistress of a small but pretty little cottage, and she welcomed us almost gaily.

'There are good people in the world besides you and me,' said she laughing, 'as you may perceive from that letter: it is from my husband's solicitor.'

The letter ran as follows:

DEAR MADAM—I have great pleasure in informing you that the late Rev. George Ewart had more generous friends than you are probably aware of. The consequence is that I am enabled to promise you an annuity of one hundred and fifty pounds a year for your lifetime, to be paid to you quarterly by me; and I beg to forward you a cheque for the first quarter.—Yours faithfully,

THOMAS DRAFT.

Serjeant's Inn.

'Of course I called immediately,' said Mrs Ewart, 'to find out who my excellent friends were; but Mr Draft was very mysterious, and used a quantity of legal terms to me, and only left upon my mind the impression that my kind friends were afraid that if their names were known some unpleasantness might arise with my husband's immediate family, who would consider that some reflection upon their conduct was intended, especially as Mr Draft is their solicitor as well as my husband's. Isn't it vexatious?'

We heartily sympathised with, and at the same time consoled Mrs Ewart. We talked about all sorts of things and persons, old times and old acquaintances; and at last, Churton asked her if she recollected Major Fortress. The blood rushed to her face, and subsided again in a moment, as she answered quietly: 'I recollect a Mr Fortress very well indeed, but he was only a lieutenant when I knew him.'

'Oh, that's the man,' observed Churton heartily. 'He is a hero now: he was all through the mutiny, and he has come back a Major, a V. C., with an addition to the means he always had, and with many graces and honours which he hadn't.'

'I should have thought he would make a fine soldier,' said Mrs Ewart smiling, 'but'—and she finished her sentence with a shake of the head which demolished Fortress's moral character.

'Fortress,' said I with some heat, 'is and always was a noble fellow; he is not, and never was, fundamentally vicious or irreligious, as people made out; he only hated humbug, and perhaps took an unwise way of shewing his hatred plainly.'

Mrs Ewart listened attentively, and looked even pleased at my vehemence. At length she asked: 'Is he much altered? I suppose I should not know him again?'

'He is a little altered, certainly,' answered Churton, 'but for the better. I feel pretty sure you would know him again: may I bring him to call?'

Mrs Ewart looked suddenly grave (for the words 'good-bye for ever' rang in her ears), but something whispered to her *Semper idem*, and she replied (almost haughtily, however): 'I can hardly imagine the great Major Fortress would care to call here; but if you think'—

'He often inquires after you,' blurted I in interruption.

'Really!' exclaimed she with an air of cool surprise; 'I am sure I ought to feel highly flattered.'

'Then I may bring him some day?' said Churton interrogatively.

'Oh, certainly!' replied she in a tone of indifference. And soon afterwards Churton and I took leave.

CHAPTER XVIII.—IN MY LADY'S CHAMBER.

Of course it will seem strange that I should know what Mrs Ewart did that night in her bedroom, especially when Churton and I were smoking a pipe together at my abode, when she was going to bed. Nevertheless, in defiance of the strange and marvellous, I saw her (in my mind's eye, you know) examine herself more attentively than she had done for some years past in the glass, and then take out of her dressing-case, and read with a sigh, the following scrawl on a dirty piece of paper:

DERE LADY—Xcuse me takin a libbaty; but I'm a dyin, and speek Gawd's trooth. The villin you marryd were my ruiny; my child's ded, but he were the farther, and he overpusswaydid me to put it on to another, which never did nothink any kind and sivil by me, leastways no more than kiss me light-arted like—he woodn't ave urted a wum—praps you no im by the name of Fortriis. So Mr F. were sent away from Collidge, and Mr E. (that's youre usban), he were seen walkin with me after, and he were pakd hof a little wiles to, but were artle enuf to kep it unbeneone to is frens. I coodn't dye easy xcep I let you no ow it were, fur I'm sawry for Mr F., and I ate Mr E., oo as treeted me shameffe, and I can't tuch im only throo you. Mr E. allus give me is adress at is clubb, but I fund out is adress in the contry jest befor I were tuk ill, and I maid up my mined to xpose im. So no mor from
ROSE WHITE.

Marrybun Workus.

Mrs Ewart had received this letter during her husband's illness which preceded their separation; she had never shewn it or mentioned it to Ewart, but it had not diminished the loathing she felt for him, and had increased her admiration and pity for Fortress. And now, as she returned the scrawl to its receptacle, she sighed: 'Poor fellow!' and as she wooed slow-coming sleep, she softly muttered: '*Semper idem*;' for though she had felt bound at her marriage to destroy Fortress's note, his motto was easily remembered.

CHAPTER XIX.—GOOD-BYE FOR EVER.

Churton took Fortress to pay the talked-of visit, for Fortress felt that the 'good-bye for ever' had

somehow been cancelled. Mrs Ewart received him with much composure (after the manner of women) and with charming grace. She displayed her children before him, and gave him clearly to understand (unless he chose to be very slow of understanding) that she was to be regarded rather as the busy matron than as the lonely widow. He remained but a short time, and departed with permission to repeat his call. Of the permission he availed himself frequently, to the great delight and material advantage of the children, who regarded Major Fortress as the king of men, the fountain of wealth, and a lineal descendant of the demi-gods. One day, when Major Fortress and Mrs Ewart were left together, the former said abruptly and hurriedly: 'Mrs Ewart, I do not wish to recur to the painful past; but I should like to establish my character with you in certain respects. I am no longer a gambler; I can no longer be called, without injustice, an infidel; but I must confess, with shame and sorrow, that there is another blot which you rightly expressed your horror at, which I assured you had fallen upon my reputation without a cause, but which I have it not in my power, even now, when perhaps your change from unmarried girl to mother might excuse me if I made my defence, to remove to your satisfaction. Do you remember what it was?'

Mrs Ewart's heart had been beating fast during this address; she had said inwardly to herself: 'I will not shew him the letter, for, after all, the guilty man was my husband;' she had waited to the end; and now with some emotion she replied: 'Major Fortress, I have need to ask your forgiveness; I was but a silly, self-righteous girl, when I behaved towards you as I did; and as for the blot you allude to, circumstances, which I hope you will not desire to hear, have cleared you altogether in my poor eyes.'

'That is fortunate,' said Fortress radiantly, having thought, as she spoke, that her troubles had only given her a sweeter expression; 'but, if you recollect, there is still the sad fact that I am in the army.'

'I have learned,' said Mrs Ewart with a sweet smile, 'to hold no sweeping theories about professions.'

'The accused may be considered, then,' rejoined Fortress laughing, 'to have cleared himself completely; and if you have not forgotten my motto'—

At this interesting point, in rushed the eldest boy, looking the very image of his dead father. Fortress glared at him a moment, grew gloomy-visaged immediately, made a few kind inquiries about the boy's welfare, and then took a colder farewell than usual of Mrs Ewart. She had noticed the glare, as of one who recognises an enemy, and the gloom which succeeded it; and as she stood at the window watching Fortress's retreating figure, which did not turn round as it was wont, and raise its hat as a parting salute, she muttered to herself, in the words of Guinevere, in the idyll she had been reading: 'The shadow of another clings to me, and makes me one pollution.'

Meanwhile, Fortress, as he wended his way, was thinking: 'I might, perhaps, have been a happy man if that boy had not come in. But to be the father of his children! Pah! I don't think I could do it. Nevertheless, she shall not be able to say that I was not *semper idem*.'

There are men to whom the story of *Enoch*

Arden is revolting, and would be revolting even if Enoch had been dead when Annie married Philip. They would have been faithful to the death to Annie, and would have found out means to save her from poverty without a sale of herself, to which the sale of an unmarried girl in the Belgravian market is, in their estimation, an irreproachable transaction. They have, moreover, when they reflect calmly, an objection to this acknowledgment of woman's influence, and think in their secret hearts that woman's vanity requires to be checked rather than encouraged—that the tyranny of beauty should be overthrown—that loveliness should not be allowed to cherish the idea (for which, alack! there is but too much foundation), that so soon as she has disposed of one victim (who may, however, have disagreed with her), there is another anxious to be swallowed up—that the charming widow with a batch of fatherless children, has but to throw out a little sweet bait, and she will forthwith hook the most desirable of her former lovers. How much of all this, added to the apparition of young Ewart in the likeness of his dead father, decided Fortress's future course, no human being can tell. He determined, however, to act up to his motto, *Semper idem*. Soon after his critical interview with Mrs Ewart (with whom he never again got upon such delicate ground), he managed to get sent upon foreign service. He distinguished himself in action, and was killed; and Mr Draft then informed Mrs Ewart that the welcome annuity had come solely from Major Fortress, who had by his will increased it by the addition of nearly all he possessed. He had also written to Mrs Ewart a long letter, in which he revealed his whole heart, and begged her acceptance of his portrait, wherein photography had been extraordinarily successful, and on the back whereof was the motto, *Semper idem*.

Will any find fault with her if she held in either hand the portraits of her husband and Major Fortress; if she gazed with tear-stained face on each; if she put down the former, gently sighing, on the table, and, passionately kissing the latter, moaned:

He was the higher and more human too,
Not Launcelot nor another;

if she hung her husband's in the room where strangers sat, and her lover's in the room where she would lie o' nights, and watch and think, and pray and weep, and haply sleep and dream?

The hypochondriac had long since gone where there is neither 'Bright's disease' nor 'rheumatism in the heel'; the Echo lay amongst the echoes of the tombs; Jenima felt the assistance of her two thousand pounds, and blessed the memory of her uncle, for she little thought to whom she was indebted for her legacy; Dr Snell had taken his departure for the place where all things, including 'tonics,' are forgotten; Mrs Platt was but a pleasant memory; and Caroline and Augusta, themselves fruitful mothers of children, talked over, again and again, with Mrs Ewart the whole story of her life, and agreed one with the other that, had she married Major Fortress, she might truly have been said to have 'married well.'

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